

Interchanges

Responses to “Traditions and Professionalization:
Reconceiving Work in Composition”

Reshaping Professionalization

Gwen Gorzelsky

Wayne State University

In “The Problematic of Experience: Redefining Critical Work in Ethnography and Pedagogy,” Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner argue that working at the intersection between critical pedagogy and critical ethnography can help us to contest “the division in composition between teaching and research” and to “undermin[e] the hierarchical relations between . . . researchers and teachers[,] teachers and students,” thus “redeploying those differences for emancipatory aims” (275). As a research methodology, they claim, critical ethnography takes us beyond critical pedagogy’s challenge to students’ experience because it can lead us to problematize the teacher’s knowledge as well (267). Such reflexive ethnography can *change* the experience it represents, particularly the teacher-researcher’s experience. As I understand them, Lu and Horner argue for a research—a professional practice—that interfuses with teaching and enables collaboration with students and work toward social justice.

This understanding shaped my reading of Bruce Horner’s “Traditions and Professionalization: Reconceiving Work in Composition.” I share Horner’s interest in developing collaborative endeavors with people outside academe and in expanding narrow visions of professionalism in composition. So my response

CCC 52:2 / DECEMBER 2000

is in the spirit of revision rather than of argument: I reread Horner's view of professionalism through the lenses of his overall argument, of critical ethnography, and of service learning. I'll begin with some shared ground. Horner makes a persuasive case for the need to appeal to the public and to gain its support for what compositionists do and for better working conditions. His call for us to publicize abusive working conditions and to ally ourselves with primary and secondary teachers as part of this effort is equally convincing. Most powerfully, perhaps, Horner argues for redeeming tradition from its scapegoat, straw man's role, for using it instead as "a site of resistance, a means of recuperating the wholeness of our work as it mediates academic and nonacademic knowledge" (394). For me, his use of the Amherst College approach to writing instruction during the mid-twentieth century works particularly well. Horner shows that a tradition that composition scholarship might easily pigeonhole as elitist or hegemonic can, in fact, contain crucial tools such as the Amherst instructors' "rejection of any codification of teaching" (385).

Horner uses this demonstration to argue that, for compositionists, drawing upon the practical knowledge embodied in such traditions "means foregoing the distinctions between professionals and laity" (388). The Amherst tradition, he suggests, "can stand as an alternative potentially disrupting the domination of professionalism in Composition" (388–89). Horner is careful to explain that his argument is not meant

to oppose the practices of publishing or evaluating, necessary to any reworking of knowledge, but to specific forms and uses of these practices that contribute to the reification of knowledge and work—most obviously for people "in" Composition, the use commonly made of these in reappointment and tenure review. (391)

Recuperating traditions, such as the Amherst approach, he claims, "will require sturdy resistance to pressures to commodify that work, whether in such forms as publication, student test results, or teaching evaluations, or 'accountability'" (390–91).

As one who values composition's efforts toward more equitable socioeconomic relations, I am in sympathy with Horner's resistance to commodification. But as he acknowledges in his analysis of the Amherst case, the capacity to resist commodification may spring from a highly privileged position within a thoroughly commodified system, in this case higher education. The Amherst group's refusal to commodify their work—or explicitly theorize it in writing—by refusing to publish, "may well" in Horner's words, "be a strategy affordable

only to those in material social circumstances of significant privilege, and may even serve as a display of such social capital" (386).

This point seems crucial to me. The strategy Horner proposes, as I understand it, is not one that is open to graduate students or junior faculty in composition right now. Or rather, if pursued, it is likely to lead them out of the profession. Given Horner's (and my) interest in working for democracy and social justice through the practice of composition, the call to erase professional/lay distinctions makes sense as an effort to equalize authority and power. But the composition faculty and administrators who make hiring and tenure decisions can no more avoid professionalization than can graduate students and junior faculty. As long as faculty members choose new colleagues rather than accepting all applicants, as long as tenure is adjudicated rather than automatic, compositionists will use—and commodify—standards to measure one another's professional standing. As I understand it, the question of professionalization in composition isn't "whether" but "what" and "how."

Like Horner, I favor recuperating the Amherst tradition of resisting the codification of teaching. But rather than resisting codification by fruitlessly attempting to evade commodification and professionalization, I suggest that we pursue the goals of democratic practice and more equitable relations by revising our professionalizing practices so that we reward efforts to forge workable alliances with students and people outside academe. By following these alliances into a range of different socio-cultural contexts—especially contexts outside higher education—participants in such alliances will experience the shifts in power relations that accompany shifts in context. The seeds of such efforts germinate in Horner's reading of the Amherst project and can take root in composition's work on service learning. Seeking ways to resist the codification of teaching can spur us to develop richer, more generative forms of scholarship and more resilient forms of professionalization.

As Horner so powerfully argues, commodified work can still realize crucial use values: "If one cannot forever delay the commodification of work, neither can one deny the continuing potential use value of that work even in its commodified form" (372). It seems to me that the challenge for us as compositionists is not in futile attempts to resist professionalization, despite its very real tendency to reify knowledge and stifle public discussion by subordinating lay perspectives to those of the specialist. Rather, given our rootedness in a higher education system saturated with commodification, we can more generatively struggle to redefine the *terms* of professionalization, evaluation, and the uses of professional authority in relation to students' and other lay people's knowledges.

Such efforts, if shaped through collaborative endeavors with lay partners, could help us to work more effectively toward democratic practices and social justice.

Lu and Horner's "The Problematic of Experience" seems to me to work toward just such a revision of professionalism. The research practice it defines both interfuses with teaching and methodologically incorporates efforts to cede authority to students and research subjects and, most powerfully, to risk the teacher/researcher's identity and transformation. The methodological design of this research practice constitutes an effort to foster the dialogue and negotiation central to democracy and social change. Lu and Horner's argument that critical ethnography serves as a particularly useful form for crafting such methodological design is borne out in other composition scholarship.

For instance, David Schaafsma's *Eating on the Street: Teaching Literacy in a Multicultural Society* uses a professionalizing project—his research and the book that emerged from it—to encourage and shape a cross-cultural dialogue. By fostering cross-racial, cross-class dialogues that redistribute authority among primary and university teachers, Schaafsma's research project encouraged a democratic exchange and negotiation unlikely to have occurred without its impetus. Similarly, in "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change," Ellen Cushman argues for an activism that engages in partnership and exchange with community members. She explains that

Activism can't be altruistic because we have to be in a position to participate in our communities. The very same position as scholar which distances us from the community also invests us with the resources we can make available to others. And we need these luxuries in order to be stable enough to give our time, knowledge, and resources. (19)

Enabling such reciprocity requires crossing boundaries in shifts from one context to another, as Wayne Campbell Peck, Lorraine Higgins, and Linda Flower demonstrate in "Community Literacy." They argue that community literacy requires disparate groups to learn and use unfamiliar discourses in negotiating collaborative projects that work concretely for social change. Together, these three arguments encourage projects that fuse teaching and research goals by bringing students and teachers into collaborative relationships with community organizations. Doing so allows us, in Cushman's terms, to use professional privilege as a means of connecting and working collaboratively with community members.

In such efforts, I believe we can reshape professionalism. But as I understand it, that project takes place through *praxis* rather than through either theory or practice alone. Thus it is rooted in the process of reflexivity. As Ann Berthoff explains, this reflexivity requires us "to look—and look again—at our

theory and practice and at the method we can derive from the dialectic of their relationship." (xi).¹ I find I can undertake this work most productively in the process of writing about my teaching. Although Horner affirms that this process, in the form of publishing and evaluating, is necessary to any reworking of knowledge, I think his argument for "foregoing" professionalism ultimately undercuts the framework that provides us with the privilege—the crucial time and other resources—that enables us to engage in the process. In other words, I am deeply in sympathy with Horner's effort to reclaim the practices of teaching as the central site of our work. But I understand professionalization as the structure that enables us to do so productively and reflexively, despite its clear tendency to reify teaching as well.

Horner's attack on the "specific forms and uses of these practices that contribute to the reification of knowledge and work—most obviously for people 'in' Composition, the use commonly made of these in reappointment and tenure review" seems particularly to the point. The question as I see it is not how to evade or circumvent professionalism (because we can't), but how to revise the forms and moments of professional adjudication, from the evaluative moments in graduate programs (e.g., comprehensive exams, prospectus meetings, dissertation defenses), to MLA and campus interviews, to tenure and promotion reviews. If we believe our own arguments that writing is not merely an act of transcribing existing knowledge but is one of producing new knowledge, if we believe that our professional work can contain use value as well as exchange value, we can foster such generative practices by revising the "what" and "how" of professional evaluation. If we want, as a profession, to pursue an agenda of democratic practices and social justice, we can devise forms of evaluation that reward collaboration with community organizations, evidence of teacherly growth rather than reified pedagogical knowledge or accomplishments, and research that negotiates researchers' and subjects' interests. We might, for instance, look to creative and performative disciplines for alternative models of evaluation. We have to professionalize. But as Horner's argument implies, we can acknowledge our professional endeavors' exchange value and yet work to develop their *use* value. In doing so, we may exchange the professional realm's currency for a coin with richer value to students and communities outside academe and, therefore, to us.

Note

1. It may be no accident that I find myself citing the woman (gender seems relevant) who Horner says coined the nickname "the Amherst mafia" to describe the college's all-male group of writing instructors (Horner 384).

Works Cited

- Berthoff, Ann. "Foreword." *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. Ed. Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo. Critical Studies in Education Series. New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1987. xi–xxiii.
- Cushman, Ellen. "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change." *College Composition and Communication* 47 (1996): 7–28.
- Horner, Bruce. "Traditions and Professionalization: Reconceiving Work in Composition." *College Composition and Communication* 51 (2000): 366–98.
- Lu, Min-Zhan, and Bruce Horner. "The Problematic of Experience: Redefining Critical Work in Ethnography and Pedagogy." *College English* 60 (1998): 257–77.
- Peck, Wayne Campbell, Lorraine Higgins, and Linda Flower. "Community Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 46 (1995): 199–222.
- Schaafsma, David. *Eating on the Street: Teaching Literacy in a Multicultural Society*. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1993.

Perpetrating Fraud upon the Laity?

Alan W. France, William B. Lalicker, and Chris Teutsch
West Chester University

Bruce Horner's call "to construct a sense of tradition in Composition as an active and activating force central to its work" (367) deserves close attention from those concerned with preserving writing pedagogy as the "subject" of composition studies. Horner is worried that composition studies will be reduced to a reified body of knowledge presided over by "composition 'specialists' who never teach composition" (390). We share his apprehension that disciplinarity will "transform Composition into something unrecognizable, a discipline in which teaching is peripheral" (380) and transform practitioners into "academic entrepreneurs pursuing private interests or engaging in purportedly 'disinterested' scholarship" (394).

We wonder, though, if we ought not distinguish between *discipline*, as a codified power/knowledge system that "contains" expertise about teaching advanced literacy, and *profession*, as a community of practitioners whose institutions enable them to "make up" knowledge about teaching literate practices as they go along. Perhaps Bruce Horner will consider this distinction between discipline and profession as a "friendly amendment," since we all agree that it is important now to locate our best curricular practices in appropriate intellectual traditions (i.e., to historicize them), in particular the tradition of liberal peda-

gogy that has generally proved most resistant to reification and commodification. His approbation of Theodore Baird's English 1–2 course at Amherst College suggests that we might well agree on the "counter-hegemonic" potential of this tradition of liberal learning, which values before everything the cultivation of the person or, as Cardinal Newman put it, the disciplining of the intellect "for its own sake." This liberal arts tradition is counter-hegemonic because it legitimizes our common resistance to the dominant instrumentalist aims of disciplinarity, the narrow functionalism of today's "corporate university."

Horner argues persuasively that the denigration of "tradition(al)" was a necessary foundational gesture in composition's emergence as a specialized knowledge field. It is here in the particulars of composition's history, however, that the need emerges for a common noun, something very like "profession." Although composition studies is a legitimate heir of the Arnoldian belletristic liberal tradition that rallied "resistance to the commodification of work and knowledge," as Horner puts it, its consolidation as "a teaching subject" (Joe Harris) has required composition studies to jettison much of this elitist baggage.

In the belletristic tradition, excellence in writing was specifically the practice of genius that could not be taught. Composition, however, was framed as inherently remedial, an ensemble of "skills" that the pedestrian might acquire in order to better serve the managerial elite for which their education was designed to qualify them. Thus, the history of rhetoric and composition in this country has had continually to accommodate two contradictory impulses: the liberal belletristic and the pragmatic functionalist (a story well told by Berlin, Brereton, Connors, Crowley, Susan Miller, and others).

In the last several decades, the "skills model" and the "service" function of composition—writing pedagogy as an accessory to real learning—have been progressively displaced by the theoretical turn in composition studies. *Theory* itself—local, para, meta, and grand—has increasingly become a major tradition, as Horner's essay attests. It may be noted that Horner's argument for rethinking the significance of "tradition" rests initially on Anthony Giddens' *Central Problems in Social Theory*, shifting then to neo-marxist theory: Kusterer's analysis of the use value of laborers' experience and Bourdieu's of the exchange value of bourgeois experience. Theory, and especially *critical theory*, has become the lingua franca we use to talk to one another about what—and how and why—we should be teaching.

Where there is theory, there must be a "discourse community" of theoreticians. This is confirmed by the ubiquity of the first-person plural in Horner's essay. The "we" marks the common assumption of a communal audience,

which implies laity whom “we” are not addressing. This is a professional exchange: it engages four tenured English professors discussing the professionalization of Composition (Horner capitalizes it) using the professional “we” in the forum of a professional journal.

We have all become, therefore, “applied theoreticians” who have laid claim to a medial role in initiating students into the multiple disciplinary formations in which they will encounter knowledge at the university and beyond. But this inter-medial role of rhetoric and writing instruction belongs, as Horner does well to remind us, to a long liberal arts tradition in which, as Gary Tate always says, writing is never really about anything except the student doing it.

But although composition cannot be reduced to a reified body of knowledge (i.e., a discipline), we need also to insist that our communal work is a tradition, a form of intellectual property that must be protected, reproduced, revised, and transmitted to new colleagues as they join this specialized conversation that we refer to as “rhetoric and composition” (a compound term that itself points to an enterprise joining theory and application). The social means to protect this property entrusted to us is “academic professionalism” based on a set of institutional privileges we call “academic freedom” and vouchsafed by the practice of tenure. Virginia Anderson has made this case persuasively in a recent essay.

To carry on our extra-, trans-, or post-disciplinary work, therefore, composition studies must have and exercise the institutional power of professional organization; we must have professional forums to do the work of adjusting tradition to the emerging social needs of our students; and we must have the specialized professional discourse (the multiple theoretical languages) to work out what has to be done to meet these needs. We need, in short, more professional power, not less.

Horner’s example of Amherst’s English 1–2 (from Robin Varnum’s *Fencing with Words*) makes this very point. The Amherst professoriate, Horner writes, “used the freedom granted to them by virtue of their dominant social position to . . . oppose or represent an alternative to the dominant” (383). We (Horner, we three authors, and the rest of the recently professionalized composition professoriate) must use our secure, if not “dominant,” positions to extend professional status to the vast corps of temporary composition laborers (who are disproportionately women) and to achieve material parity with the other fields that constitute English literature and language studies.

Collective affiliation, which we might as well call “professional,” is the only way to parry administrative downsizing and the further conversion of tenure-

track positions to marginal academic piecework. It's professionalize—and, ideally, unionize—or join the growing ranks of the academic proletariat. While we support Horner's stand against curricular disciplinarity, we hope he will concede the importance of working together toward full professional status and institutional parity for rhetoric and composition studies.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Virginia. "Property Rights." *College English* 62 (2000): 445–72.
- Horner, Bruce. "Traditions and Professionalization: Reconceiving Work in Composition." *College Composition and Communication* 51, (2000): 366–98.
- Varnum, Robin. *Fencing with Words: A History of Writing Instruction at Amherst College during the Era of Theodore Baird, 1938–1966*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1996.

Redefining, Resisting, and Negotiating Professionalization in Composition

Bruce Horner
Drake University

My thanks to Professors Gorzelsky, France, Lalicker, and Teutsch for their responses to my essay and for the opportunity and direction they give me to briefly clarify several issues raised and to further the "revisions" and "amendments" they offer.

Two issues raised have to do with what is meant by professionalization and by resistance to it. Professor Gorzelsky notes that the strategy adopted by the Amherst group of refusing to publish "is not one open to graduate students or junior faculty in composition right now," that "composition faculty and administrators who make hiring and tenure decisions can no more avoid professionalization than can graduate students and junior faculty," and that therefore "the question of professionalization in composition isn't 'whether' but 'what' and 'how.'" Indeed, to attempt to "evade" professionalization might be counterproductive, for, as she later notes, professionalization, because of the time and other resources it allows, is "the structure that enables us to [reclaim the practices of teaching] productively and reflexively."

In making these observations, Gorzelsky approaches the work of composition as material social practice. That is to say, she understands the work of

composition “professionals” as being located in the specific material conditions of social relations and available technological and other material resources. In insisting on the material sociality of “professional” work, she is, in effect, resisting the usual ideological distinction between “intellectual” versus “non-intellectual,” “mental” versus “physical” work that is commonly invoked in defining and defending the privileged position of academic (and other) workers *as* “professionals” (Horner 2, 7–9). While still acknowledging the real material differences between the two types of work so designated, Gorzelsky’s insistence that both are material social practices robs those differences of their ideological force in maintaining class distinctions between “professionals” and “non-professionals.” In the observations just noted, for example, Gorzelsky uses “professionalization” primarily to refer to specific working conditions—the time and other resources that, among other things, are part of what, Gorzelsky notes, “enable[s] us to [reclaim the practices of teaching] productively and reflexively.” Of course, those same working conditions can be used in the worst sense of professional “accoutrements”—not “equipage” but “trappings”—displays of one’s class position, justifications for deriding the “laity,” and so on. As John Trimbur has observed, “the contradiction between exchange value and use value is not likely to go away or to be resolved easily in the practice of professional life” (144). But what Gorzelsky proposes, it seems to me, in an argument I see as aligned to my own, are strategies for addressing that contradiction. She suggests that we extract specific use values from the working conditions of our locations as composition part-time, adjunct, tenure-line junior or senior faculty, program directors, and graduate students, working with specific types of training at specific institutions and types of institutions at specific historical moments.

What would this mean? It would not mean rejecting writing, researching, theorizing, and/or teaching. Nor did I intend my essay to advocate any such strategy. But we can rethink and redefine the work of these activities, not simply for ourselves as individuals but for our institutions and for the sake simultaneously of ourselves, our students, and the public. As Gorzelsky rightly notes, for many workers in composition, the option of refusing to publish is currently no option at all. Rather than asking whether to publish, or to engage in theory, or teach, say, we can better ask what kind of publishing, writing, theorizing, and teaching should be undertaken, and to what ends—matters not only of venue but of genre, style, audience, purpose, and conditions (I’m thinking here, for example, of Gorzelsky’s examples of Schaafsma’s book/project and the community literacy described by Peck et al.). What is published—or, more to the point, the activities of writing that are undertaken; the conditions under which particular kinds of

writing, teaching, theorizing, and researching are conducted and by which they are made possible (or those conditions which prevent or detract from these); the thrust of this work; the criteria and procedures by which the work is defined and evaluated; and the role such evaluation plays in determining one's work position can and should be subject to negotiation, revision, and critique. Professional "standards" for these activities cannot be avoided—by, say, hiring as colleagues all who apply, in Gorzelsky's hypothetical alternative. But we should work toward negotiating for those standards that best serve the interests of teachers and students, of teaching and learning, and for using them to promote such interests and not others.¹ Along these lines, we can call for, and defend, standards for "professional" working conditions as a means of "enabl[ing] us to [reclaim the practices of teaching] productively and reflexively," as Gorzelsky suggests, in the interest not only of ourselves but also of our students and the public. To clarify this point further: the interest of many of us in working for democracy and social justice does not require "eras[ing] professional/lay distinctions," at least not if that would mean ignoring the material differences in the social positionings and resources of those identified as composition professionals and those identified as among the laity. To do so would be either a futile or disastrous effort to escape our material histories, an example not of "resistance" but self-defeating "opposition" (Chase 14–15). However, using professional/lay distinctions, say, in debate over composition courses to silence individuals—the laity because of their purported ignorance (denying their justifiable interest) or the composition professionals *because* of their self-interest (denying their work experience and knowledge)—would be counterproductive.

We can and should resist the fetishization of the accoutrements of what might be identified as composition professionalism (or, for that matter, the accoutrements of being among the laity), rather than accepting the commodification of these as total and complete. We can, in other words, put any resources granted to us as professional "privileges" to ends other than displays of our "professional" status: as "equipment," not "trappings." I see Gorzelsky advocating such resistance in calling for us to problematize "what" and "how" forms and practices associated with "professionalization" work (and to what ends) and to "redefine the *terms* of professionalization, evaluation, and the uses of professional authority in relation to students' and other lay people's knowledges."

That said, I have in my essay attempted to avoid identifying, let alone proposing, a specific mode by which such resistance to fetishizing attributes of professionalism does or should take place. I stated in my essay that "'resistant' traditions cannot be understood outside the circumstances of their practices;

or rather, to remove those practices from those circumstances is to reify and commodify them” (386). So, just as I would not advocate that workers in composition refuse to publish, neither would I advocate, or speak against, other strategies as blanket means to achieve “resistance” outside considerations of the specific circumstances of their enactment. For similar reasons, while I share Professor Gorzelsky’s admiration for the service-learning and research projects she cites (Schaafsma, Peck et al., and Cushman) and other such projects, I would not want to rule out of hand the emancipatory potential of pedagogies and research projects that appear more traditionally academic, nor encourage the assumption that, say, the introduction of service-learning into composition pedagogies in itself will produce desirable shifts in power relations or enrich composition scholarship. To do so would be to treat the results of the labor of specific actors working under specific circumstances in “service-learning” or other projects as objective characteristics of a commodified practice—service-learning, university/community alliances, teacher research—imagined as a guaranteed fix for our troubles, something we can sell, if only to ourselves. Moreover, the general argument I make in my essay against dismissing what goes by the name of “traditional” also applies to a common tendency among compositionists to dismiss what goes by the name of “academic.” That is, our distrust of work identified with both these terms may say more about our dematerialized conceptions of them than about the actual work accomplished under such rubrics. Thus, we may be tempted to uncritically valorize non-academic work as by definition more socially significant, thereby blinding ourselves to the more attenuated, unofficial, but no less real social significance of work deemed, and demeaned as, merely “academic” (Horner 115–19).

With their friendly amendments, Professors France, Lalicker, and Teutsch provide two useful reminders that qualify these remarks: first, that composition workers cannot effectively accomplish the task of “negotiating” their labor with either the public or the schools where they work without forming collective affiliations, in the form of professional organizations and unions; second, that theorizing the teaching subject is one of the tasks necessary to the existence of such affiliations. They point to both these tasks in the distinction they suggest between *discipline* and *profession*. Of course, historically, professions, at least outside the academy, have had the tasks of both negotiating with the public on terms for the exchange of their labor and defining/disciplining their members’ knowledge/expertise. Although these tasks are interrelated and interdependent, as I read France, Lalicker, and Teutsch’s response, their distinction between *profession* and *discipline* is meant to remind us especially of the

necessity for the first of these, a task commonly seen as antithetical to *academic* professionalism.² In my essay, space considerations prevented me from doing more than touching on the strategies of unionizing and professionalizing in fulfilling this task, issues I address more fully in Chapters 1 and 5 of *Terms of Work*. Here, suffice it to say simply that I would second France, Lalicker, and Deutsch's amendment insisting on the need to pursue such strategies to enable us to effectively take up this task of negotiating our labor. On the question of theorizing the teaching subject, again I would second their reminder of the ongoing need to theorize one's subject/discipline/profession. I argued in the essay that theorizations of the subject have to be understood as strategic and thus also in need of continual challenge to resist their commodification by the dominant. But it is important to bear in mind that this work can only be performed in concert with, rather than independent of, the work we put into organizing collective affiliations among practitioners within the discipline and negotiating with the public as a labor force.

The close alignment I see between the arguments of the respondents and my own makes it seem appropriate to end this discussion with a needling question poised at the heart of our exchange: How might compositionists' attempted use for social justice of whatever "privileged" working conditions they happen to enjoy as "professionals" work to ultimately reinforce existing structures of oppression, rather than change such structures (Fox, "Change"; Vandenberg 28–29)? Although this question—for reasons that by now should be clear—is one I believe it is impossible to ever answer definitively, it seems, apropos of the preceding remarks, a question crucial for all of us to keep asking about our work.

Notes

1. For useful cautions about "standards," see Brannon; Fox, *Defending*; and Slevin.
2. Consider, for example, the remarks made by James Carey, secretary-treasurer of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, in speaking to the 1962 NEA national convention:

One of the prime troubles—if not the chief curse—of the teaching industry is precisely that word "profession." That term, as it is used so frequently here, implies that your craft is somewhat above this world of ours; it implies a detachment, a remoteness from the daily battle of the streets, in the neighborhoods and cities. . . . If the charwomen of the schools have sense enough to band together and organize and negotiate contracts, and the teachers do not, I wonder sometimes who should have the degrees. (qtd. in Carlson 96–97)

Works Cited

- Bloom, Lynn Z., Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White, eds. *Composition in the Twenty-first Century: Crisis and Change*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1996.
- Brannon, Lil. "The Problem of National Standards." *College Composition and Communication* 46 (1995): 440–45.
- Carlson, Dennis. *Teachers and Crisis: Urban School Reform and Teachers' Work Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Chase, Geoffrey. "Accommodation, Resistance and the Politics of Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 39 (1988): 13–22.
- Fox, Tom. "Change and Complicity." *College Composition and Communication* 49 (1998): 256–59.
- . *Defending Access: A Critique of Standards in Higher Education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 1999.
- Horner, Bruce. *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2000.
- Slevin, James. "Disciplining Students: Whom Should Composition Teach and What Should They Know?" Bloom et al. 153–65.
- Trimbur, John. "Writing Instruction and the Politics of Professionalization." Bloom et al. 133–45.
- Vandenberg, Peter. "Composing Composition Studies: Scholarly Publication and the Practice of Discipline." *Under Construction: Working at the Intersections of Composition Theory, Research, and Practice*. Ed. Christine Farris and Chris M. Anson. Logan: Utah State UP, 1998. 19–29.